اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer

Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah Al-Inshirah - 94

سُوْرَةُ اَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate**)**

اَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ١

(94:1) (O Prophet), Did We not lay open your breast

(1)

(1) To begin the discourse with this question, and then the subsequent theme, shows that the Messenger (peace be upon him) at that time was very disturbed and distressed at the great hardships that he was passing through in the initial stage of his mission of calling the people to Islam. Under those conditions Allah addressed him and consoling him, said: O Prophet, have We not blessed you with such and such favor. Then, why do you feel so disturbed and distressed at these initial difficulties.

A little consideration of the context wherever the word sharh-sadr (opening up of the breast) has occurred in the Quran, shows that it has two meanings:

(1) In (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 125), it was said: So whomever Allah wills to guide aright, He makes his breast wide open to Islam (yashrah sadrahu lil-Islam); and in (Surah Az- Zumar, Ayat 22): Can the person whose breast Allah has opened for Islam (sharahullahu sadrahu lil-Islam) and he is walking in the light shown by his Lord. At both these places sharh-sadr implies to free oneself from every kind of distraction and vacillation and to be satisfied with Islam as the only right way of life, and to regard the beliefs, principles of morality and civilization, religious instructions and injunctions, which Islam has given to man, as right and true.

(2) In (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 12-13), it has been mentioned that when Allah appointed the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to the great office of Prophethood and commanded him to

go and confront the Pharaoh and his mighty empire, he submitted: My Lord, I fear that they will treat me as a liar, and my breast straitens. And in *(Surah Ta* Ha, Ayats 25-26), it has been stated that on this very occasion the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) implored Allah, saying: Lord, open up my breast for me (Rabbishrahli sadri) and make my task easy for me. Here, straitening of the breast implies a person's finding it too hard for himself to shoulder the onerous responsibilities of Prophethood and going out to clash with a mighty and tyrannical power of disbelief all by himself, and sharh-sadr implies that his morale be boosted so that he is ready to undertake any campaign and any task however difficult and hard, without any hesitation, and he develops the nerve and courage to shoulder the great responsibilities of Prophethood.

A little consideration will show that in this verse, "opening up of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) breast", contains both these meanings. According to the first meaning, it implied that before the Prophethood the Prophet (peace be upon him) looked upon the religion of the polytheistic Arabs, Christians, Jews and fire worshippers as false, and was not even satisfied with the hanifiyyat prevalent among some of the Arab monotheists, for it was an ambiguous creed which contained no detail of the right way. (This we have explained in E.Ns of Surah As-Sajdah). But since he himself did not know what the right way was, he was mentally confused and distracted. With the blessing of Prophethood, Allah removed his mental agitation and opened up before him the way of right guidance, which brought him full peace of mind. According to the second meaning, it implies that along with the blessing of Prophethood Allah also blessed him with the courage, spirit of resolution and broad mindedness which were needed for shouldering the onerous responsibilities of the great office. He became bearer of the vast knowledge, which no other human mind could encompass and contain. He was blessed with the wisdom which could rectify any evil however grave and wide spread. He developed the capability to stand up without any equipment and the apparent help and support of a worldly power as the standard-bearer of Islam in a society sunk in ignorance and barbarism, to brave any storm of hostility without the least

hesitation, to endure patiently all the difficulties and hardships of the way so that no power might cause him to abandon his position and standpoint. Thus, The verse means to impress the point: When Allah has blessed you, O Prophet, with this invaluable wealth of sharh-sadr, why do you feel distressed and depressed at the hardships you are experiencing in the initial stage of your mission.

Some commentators have taken sharh-sadr to mean shaqq- Sadr (splitting up of the breast) and have declared this verse to be a proof of the miracle of sharh-sadr as related in the traditions of the Hadith. But the fact is that the proof of that miracle is dependent only on the traditions of the Hadith, it is not correct to prove it from the Quran. According to the Arabic language, sharh-sadr can in no way be taken to mean shaqq-sadr. Allama Alusi in the Ruh al- Maani says: In the sight of the esearchscholars it is a weak thing to regard sharh-sadr as shaqq-sadr.

وَ وَضَعْنَا عَ كَ وِزْرَكَ ﴿٢﴾

(94:2) and relieve you of the burden

الَّذِیۡۤ اَ نۡقَضَ ظَہۡرَکَ ۙ﴿۳﴾

(94:3) that had well-nigh broken your back? (2)

(2) Some of the commentators have interpreted this to mean that before Prophethood, in the days of ignorance, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had happened to commit certain errors because of which he was feeling disturbed, and Allah by sending down this verse consoled and satisfied him, saying that He had forgiven him those errors. But in our opinion it is a grave mistake to interpret this verse thus. In the first place, the word vizr does not necessarily mean a sin, but it is also used for a heavy burden. Therefore, there is no reason why it should in every case be taken in the bad sense. Secondly, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) life before Prophethood was also so clean and pure that it had been presented in the Quran as a challenge before the opponents. So much so that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was made to point out to the disbelievers: I have already lived a lifetime among you before the revelation of this Quran. (Surah Younus, Ayat 16). And he was also not the type of a person who would commit a sin secretly. God forbid, had he been such a man, Allah would not have been unaware of it, and would not have made him proclaim the thing before the people openly, which He made him proclaim in the above-mentioned verse of Surah Younus, if his person carried the blot of a sin committed secretly. Thus, in fact, in this verse vizr means a heavy burden and it implies the burden of distress, anguish and anxiety that was difficult on his sensitive nature when he saw his nation deeply sunk in ignorance and barbarism. Idols were being worshipped, the community was engrossed in idolatry and polytheistic customs and practices, filth of immorality and indecency prevailed all around, wickedness and corrupt practices were rampant in society, the powerful were suppressing the powerless, girls were being buried alive, tribes were subjecting one another to surprise attacks, and sometimes the wars of vengeance continued for a hundred years at a stretch. No one's life, property and honor was safe unless he had a strong band at his back. This grieved the Prophet (peace be upon him) but he could find no way to cure the malady. This same anxiety was

weighing down his back. Allah by showing him the way to guidance removed its burden from him. Then as soon as he was appointed to the office of Prophethood, he came to know that belief in the doctrine of Tauhid, the Hereafter and Prophethood was the master-key by which each corruption in human life could be eradicated and the way to reform opened in every aspect of life. This guidance from Allah relieved him of his burden and he felt re-assured that by means of it he would not only be able to cure the maladies of Arabia but also of all mankind outside Arabia as well.

وَ رَفَعْنَا لَکَ ذِکْرَکَ ؕ﴿۴﴾

(94:4) And did We not exalt your fame? (3)

(3) This was said at a time when no one could even conceive how the renown of the one unique individual, who had only a few followers confined only to the city of Makkah, would be exalted throughout the world and what high fame he would achieve. But Allah Almighty gave His Messenger (peace be upon him) this good news under those very conditions and then fulfilled it in a strange way. In the first place, he took from his enemies themselves the task of exalting his renown. One of the methods that the disbelievers of Makkah adopted to defeat his mission was that in the Hajj season when the pilgrims from every corner of Arabia were attracted to their city, they would visit them at their halting places and would warn them to beware of a dangerous man called Muhammad (peace be upon him), who they alleged, worked such magic on the people that father was separated from son, brother from brother, and husband from wife; therefore, they should keep away from him. The same thing they said to all other people, who visited Makkah on other than Hajj days in connection with pilgrimage or on other business. In this way although they were trying to defame the Prophet (peace be upon him), yet the result was that his name reached every nook and corner of Arabia and the enemies themselves took him out of his seclusion in Makkah and introduced him among all the tribes of the country.

After this, it was but natural that the people should become curious to know as to who this man was, what he preached, what was his character like and who were the people influenced by his magic and what sort of effect his magic had on them. As the propaganda of the Makkan disbelievers spread, the people's curiosity also grew. Then, when as a result of this curiosity the people came to know of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) morals, his character and conduct, when they heard the Quran and found what teachings it presented and when the people saw how different the lives of those who had been influenced by what was being described as magic had become from the lives of the common Arabs, the bad name started being changed into good name. So much so that by the time the Hijrah took place, there was perhaps no tribe left anywhere in Arabia from which one or another person, one or another clan had not accepted Islam and in which at least some people had not developed sympathy and interest in the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his message. This was the first stage of the exaltation of his renown. Then from the Hijrah started the second stage in which, on the one hand, the hypocrites, the Jews and the prominent polytheists of Arabia were actively engaged in defaming him, and, on the other, the Islamic State of Al-Madinah was presenting such a practical model of God-worship, God consciousness, piety and devotion, purity of morals and community life, justice and equity, equality of man and man, generosity of the rich, care of the poor, fulfillment of pledges and promises and righteousness in dealings, which was conquering the hearts. The enemies tried by resort to war to impede the growing influence of the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the party of the believers, trained and developed under his own leadership, proved its superiority by their discipline, their bravery, their fearlessness of death, and their adherence to restrictions of morality even in the state of war, so convincingly that entire Arabia had to recognize it as a power to be reckoned with. Within ten years the Prophet's (peace be upon him) renown become so exalted that the same land in which the opponents had exerted their utmost to defame him, reverberated with the slogan of Ash hadu anna Muhammad ar-Rasul Allah from one end to the other. Then the third stage commenced with the establishment of the righteous Caliphate when his holy name

started being mentioned and praised everywhere in the world. This process continues till today, and will continue till Resurrection if Allah so wills. Wherever in the world there exists a settlement of the Muslims, the apostleship of Muhammad (peace be upon him) is being proclaimed aloud in the call to the Prayer five times a day, blessings of Allah are being invoked on him in the Prayers, and his sacred remembrance is being made in the Friday Sermons. There is no moment in the 12 months of the year and in the 24 hours of the day when at one or another place in the world, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) name is not being mentioned. This is a clear proof of the truth of the Quran that when in the initial stage of the Prophethood Allah proclaimed wa rafana laka dhikrak, no one could estimate and imagine with what esteem and to what great extent the Prophet's (peace be upon him) renown would be exalted. In a Hadith, Abu Saeed Khudri has reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Gabriel came to me and said: My Lord and your Lord asks, in what ways have I exalted your renown. I submitted: Allah alone has the best knowledge. He said, Allah says: Whenever mention is made of Me, you too will be mentioned along with Me. (Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Musnad Abu Yala, Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Hibban, Ibn Marduyah, Abu Nuaim). The whole later history stands witness that this prediction has proved literally true.

فَاِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا۝٥

(94:5) Indeed, there is ease with hardship.

اِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ۙ﴿۶﴾

(94:6) Most certainly, there is ease with hardship. (4)

(4) This has been repeated twice so as to reassure the Prophet (peace be upon him) that the bad times he was passing through at that time would not last for ever, but were going to be replaced by good times in the near future. On the surface this appears to be a contradiction that hardship should be accompanied by ease, for these two things do not co-exist. But the words hardship with ease instead of ease after hardship have been used in the sense that the period of ease is so close to it as if it were a concomitant of it.

فَاِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانْصَبْ ۙ﴿۷﴾

(94:7) So, whenever you are free, strive in devotion,

وَ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ ؕ﴿۸﴾

(94:8) and turn to your Lord with longing.(5)

(5) So when you have finished (your duties): When you are free from other occupations, whether occupations in connection with the preaching of divine message, or teaching and training of the new converts, or domestic occupations of mundane nature. The commandment means: When you are no more occupied, you should spend your time in the labor and toil of Allah’s worship and turn all your attention exclusively to your Lord.